

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0868

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY DOHA POUCH

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 3867

FROM AMB WOLLE MUSCAT

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MMOL, MPOL, ECON, PFOR, MU

SUBJ: OMAN ANNOUNCE PURCHASES MILITARY PLANES, MISSILES

REF: MUSCAT A-47 (NOTAL), KUWAIT 3442 (NOTAL)

1. OMANI DEPUTY MINISTER DEFENCE ANNOUNCED AUGUST 31 SIGNATURE CONTRACT WORTH 36 MILLION UK POUNDS (APPROX. \$85 MILLION) WITH BRITISH AIRCRAFT CORP FOR PURCHASE 12 JAGUAR STRIKE AIRCRAFT, AS WELL AS SECOND CONTRACT WORTH 35 MILLION UK POUNDS FOR 28 RAPIER MISSILE "FIRE UNITS," ALSO WITH BAC. THE RAPIERS WERE DESCRIBED AS ONE OF MOST ADVANCED LOW-LEVEL AIR DEFENCE SYSTEMS.

2. BBC ANNOUNCEMENT SEPT 4 GAVE SAME NUMBERS UNITS BUT PLACED VALUE CONTRACTS AT 45 MILLION POUNDS FOR JAGUARS AND 47 MILLION FOR RAPIERS. MINDEF PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER REID ANDERSON STATES BBC ANNOUNCEMENT BASED ON COMPANY PRESS
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RELEASE, AND PROBABLY INCLUDES SPARES AND ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT.

3. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY REACTIONS RECEIVED FROM
HOST COUNTRIES OF ADDRESSEES.

4. COMMENT: ASIDE FROM SUBSTANTIAL FISCAL IMPACT THESE
PURCHASES OVER NEXT TWO YEARS, THERE MAY BE POLITICAL
FALLOUT AS WELL. ITS NEIGHBORS MAY NOT VIEW THESE WEAPONS
IN DEFENSIVE LIGHT THAT OMAN WISHES TO PORTRAY THEM,
ALTHOUGH IT WILL BE A GREAT MANY YEARS BEFORE THERE ARE
OMANIS SUFFICIENTLY TRAINED TO USE THEM AND OTHER
GOVERNMENTS ARE UNLIKELY TO PERMIT THEIR CITIZENS TO MAN
THEM IN ANY AGGRESSIVE CAUSE. MILITARY VALUE OF THIS
SYSTEM IS MARGINAL: AIR ATTACK FROM PDRY HAS BEEN POSSIBLE
FOR A LONG TIME, AND WILL STILL BE POSSIBLE FOR MANY MONTHS.
IF OMAN'S NORTHERN NEIGHBORS DEVELOP AGGRESSIVE DESIGNS,
THEY WOULD HAVE SAME MANPOWER PROBLEMS, BUT, OVER THE LONG
RUN, ARE FAR MORE CAPABLE FINANCIALLY OF SUSTAINING AN ARMS
RACE. BUT IMMEDIATE IMPACT WHICH BEARS WATCHING MOST
CAREFULLY IS REACTION OF COUNTRIES WHO HAVE GIVEN AID TO
OMAN. IF THEY VIEW THESE PURCHASES AS INORDINATE, COST OF THIS
DECISION TO OMAN COULD BE SUBSTANTIAL AND SERIOUS.
STOLTZFUS

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